

Remote Classroom Observations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Our Project

- *Evaluating Michigan's Early Literacy Law: Impacts, Implementation and Improving State Capacity (R305H190004)*
- Strunk, Kilbride, Wright, Weiland, Jacob, Chapman, & Howell
- Michigan State University, Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Center for Educational Performance and Information, & University of Michigan



Our Project

- Assessing the implementation, impact, and cost of the Michigan “Read by Grade 3” law intended to increase early literacy outcomes for Michigan students
- Classroom observations to understand teacher’s instruction when they receive literacy coaching (funded in part by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation)



Changing Plans

- The COVID-19 pandemic began while we were planning a study of early literacy coaching for the 2020-2021 academic year.
- Restrictions to in-person research.
- Had planned to enter classrooms and record videos of literacy instruction in Fall 2020.
- Law still in effect and we wanted to continue to study its implementation.
- Needed a new plan!



New Plan: Remote Data Collection

- We decided to collect video observations with Swivls
- Robotic mount for tablet or smartphone
- 360-degree rotating platform that works in tandem with a handheld or wearable tracker
- App that allows videos to be instantly uploaded to a cloud-based storage system.



Remote Data Collection

- We decided to collect video observations with Swivls
- Robotic mount for tablet or smartphone
- 360-degree rotating platform that works in tandem with a handheld or wearable tracker
- App that allows videos to be instantly uploaded to a cloud-based storage system.
- Captured over 100 hours of elementary literacy instruction in 24 classrooms across our state.



Benefits of Remote Data Collection

- Greater flexibility for both researchers and educators
- More distant locations
- Captured more (and better quality) classroom talk than when using a typical video camera
- Less intrusive than sending a research team into schools
- Less expensive (over time) than costs associated with travel and in-person data collection.



Challenges of Remote Data Collection

- Supporting teachers to use the equipment
- Supporting teachers to understand what to capture
- Cannot ask questions in real time
- Harder to capture the classroom environment



Solutions

- Information sessions & training sessions for teachers.
- Clear directions
- Contact person for support
- Quickly checking in the data and scanning to make sure it is complete
- Post-observation surveys
- Asking teachers to film or collect additional images of physical aspects of the classroom (e.g., an image of your classroom library)



Moving Forward

- Continuing to use Swivls now that restrictions are lifted
- This year: 31 classrooms in six Intermediate School Districts
- Using Swivls in other projects (e.g., My NSF-funded grant focused on remote coaching of science instruction so that science coaches can “see” instruction without having to enter classrooms).

THANKS!

Any questions?

You can email me at tswright@msu.edu